The Expanding Universe of Astronomy On Tap

Public Outreach Events

Sean McLaughlin (AoT SF/UC Stanford), Brian Levine (AoT NYC/AMNH), Sophia Skowronski (AoT SF/Eastbay Astronomical Society), and Rachael Livermore (University of Melbourne)

The Mission
Astronomy on Tap (AoT) is a network of (mostly) free public outreach events featuring science presentations in bars (or similar) combined often with music, games, trivia, and more for a fun and engaging atmosphere. While the main goal is to convey cutting-edge science results and fundamental concepts, these flexible, low-pressure events encourage attendees to interact directly with scientists in novel ways, and attract members of the public who might not choose to attend a formal lecture. Presenters, often early in their careers, practice public speaking in ways not normally available in academic environments.

The Constellation
Astronomy on Tap events have been, or will soon be, held in more than 35 cities ("satellites," logos below) in 10 countries. Frequency and attendance vary, from events held monthly, to those less frequent, and one-off "fly-bys", with regular event attendance varying between a few dozen and upwards of 500 people. Each satellite is customized, based on interests and style of the local organizer(s), the culture of the host city, and the venue. Creative elements include games and contests, stage names, giveaways, custom merchandise, etc. Events can be themed on milestones (e.g. HST 25th), astronomical events (e.g. the Eclipse, Cassini’s demise), or other Astronomy-related topics (e.g. the Moon, Stars, Women in Science, Water, Politics). Special events have included movie screenings, and collaborations with festivals & artists. Spin-off and related events include Sexology on Tap, Bio on Tap, Dinosaurs on Tap, Astro on Deck (on an aircraft carrier).

The Origin Story (our Big Bang)
In 2012, then Yale astronomy postdoc, Dr. Meg Schwamb, organized 2 “Astronomy Uncorked” events in a New Haven wine bar. The universe had formed! Shortly thereafter, Meg started "Astronomy on Tap" in a New York City bar. By the end of 2013, the universe expanded even more, with nine events in NYC, and another location taking structure in Columbus, OH.

Continued Expansion of the AoT Universe
A group of the satellite coordinators (or “Host Stars”) collaboratively developed our Launch Manifesto in early 2016. This document is shared with those who wish to start up a new satellite location. It details requirements for being an Astronomy on Tap event, and includes tips, options, history, common venue requirements, and more. The document also includes information to share with presenters and volunteers, and checklists for leading up to, and the day of, the event.

Publishing the Model
In 2016, NYC coordinators Dr. Emily Rice and Brian Levine, published the AoT model (see: citation and link at the bottom of this poster), grounded in, and informed by, frameworks common in informal science education, with attention paid to creating low-pressure, leisure-time settings known to promote learning.

Evaluation
Evaluation is tricky given the decentralized style of events, however some initial results out of the Austin, TX satellite point to high interests from participants, and roughly equal gender participation. Unpublished results from NYC indicate slightly more women than men, and extremely high interest in repeat attendance. And a small study is under way in NYC looking at who is attending, motivations for attendance, whether/how we are meeting our goals.

Learn More! Join Us!

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Our model, in the Communicating Astronomy to the Public journal (Rice & Levine 2016, CAP 21, 13)

Fill out this form to receive our Launch Manifesto with information on starting your own AoT events!

Visit our website for information on upcoming events and to sign up for our newsletter!
http://bit.ly/AoTwebsite

Science is Even Better with Beer!